

expression special technical features is defined as meaning those technical features that define the contribution which each claimed invention, considered as a whole, makes over the prior art.

The Restriction Requirement asserts that the claims of Groups I and II do not share at least one technical feature in common with each other that is not disclosed or suggested by Staudt (U.S. Patent No. 6,363,598). Applicants respectfully disagree.

Each of Groups I and II share the common technical feature of directly marking the ends of each component so that all of the marks along the mounted components are substantially aligned. In particular, Claims 21-24 recite a string formed by the method recited in Claim 13, in which Claim 13 recites, among other things:

d) drawing an orientation mark axially aligned with the mark on the orientation gauge on the external periphery of the component...

...g) screwing a second orientation gauge including a thread matching that of the second threaded element and a makeup stop abutment and having a mark on its external periphery onto the second threaded element to bring the stop abutments of the threaded element and the orientation gauge into mutual bearing contact,

the orientation gauge used during the screwing g) being the first orientation gauge if the threads of the first and second threaded elements are both male or both female, or being of a matching type to the first orientation gauge and having its mark axially aligned with the mark of the first orientation gauge when the first and second orientation gauges are screwed into abutment if one of the threaded elements is male and the other is female; and

h) comparing an angular offset between the marks on the component and the orientation gauge with a pre-defined set value Q and a new starting position of the machining tool is defined as being axially offset with respect to the initial position by a quantity determined as a function of the direction and amplitude of any existing deviation.

In the marking method described in Staudt, the male extremity of a given component has a marking associated with the marking of a *previous* component, and the female extremity of this given component has a marking associated with the marking of the male

extremity of a *following* component. However, the markings on the given component are unrelated to each other. By contrast, by way of the method recited in Claim 13, marks are provided directly at both ends of each component. As a result, all the marks along all the mounted components are substantially aligned. This shared technical feature is not taught by Staudt, nor would it have been obvious to modify Staudt to arrive at this shared technical feature.

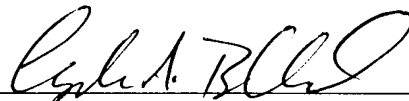
As such, when the claims of the present application are considered as a whole, the Restriction Requirement does not persuasively establish that there is not at least one common or corresponding special technical feature in each of the claims. Accordingly, Applicants traverse the outstanding Restriction Requirement as the outstanding Restriction Requirement has not established there is no unity of invention between the claims.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the requirement to elect a single species be withdrawn, and that a full examination on the merits of Claims 13-24 be conducted.

Should the Examiner deem that a personal or telephone interview would be of assistance in advancing this application toward allowance, he or she is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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